RICH MENS CHILDREN

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SYNOPSIS.

Bill Cannon, the bonanza king, and his daughter, Rose, who had passed up Mrs. Cornelius Ryan's ball at San Francisco to accompany her father, arrive at Antelope. Dominick Ryan calls on his mother to beg a ball invitation for his wife, and is refused. The determined old lady refuses to recognize her daughter-in-law. Dominick had been trapped into a marriage with Bernice Iverson, a stenographer, several years his senior. She squanders his money, they have frequent quarrels, and he slips away. Cannon and his daughter are snowed in at Antelope. Dominick Ryan is rescued from storm in unconscious condition and brought to Antelope hotel. Antelope is cut off by storm. Rose Cannon nurses Dominick back to life. Two weeks later Bernice discovers in a paper where husband is and writes letter trying to smooth over difficulties between them. Dominick at last is able to join fellow snowbound prisoners in hotel parlor. He loses temper over talk of Buford, an actor. After three weeks' end of imprisonment is seen. Telegrams and mail arrive. Dominick gets letter from wife. Tells Rose he doesn't love wife, and never did. Storm-bound people begin to depart. Rose and Dominick embrace, father sees them and demands an explanation. Rose's brother Gene is made manager of ranch, and is to get it if he stays sober a year. Cannon expresses sympathy for Dominick's position in talk with Rose. Dominick returns home. Berny exerts herself to please him, but he is indifferent. Cannon calls on Mrs. Ryan. They discuss Dominick's marriage difficulties, and Cannon suggests buying off Berny. Dominick goes to park on Sunday with Berny and family, sees Miss Cannon bows to her and starts uneasiness in Berny.

CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued.)

Yet, to Berny, this hectic prospect looked gray; all color seemed sucked from it. It appeared pale and alien, its comfortable intimacy gone. She was like a stranger walking in a strange place, a forlorn, remote land, where she felt miserable and homesick. The sense of being dazed was passing from her. Walking forward with short, careful steps, she was slowly coming to the meaning of her discovery—adjusting herself to it, realizing its significance. She had an uncomfortable sensation of not being able to control the muscles round her mouth, so that if spoken to she would have had difficulty in answering, and would have been quite unable to smile.

An open carriage passed her, and she drew aside, then mechanically looked after it as it rolled forward. There was a single figure in it—a woman. Berny could see her head over the lowered hood, and the little parasol she held, white with a black lace cover and having a joint in the handle. Her eyes followed this receding head, moving so evenly against the background of trees. It soared along without sinking or rising, with the even, forward flight of a bird, passed Hannah and Josh and Hazel, turning to drop on them quick looks, which seemed, from its elevated position and the shortness of the inspection, to have something of disdain in them.

As the carriage drew near Dominick, who walked at the head of the line with Pearl by the hand, Berny saw the head move, lean forward, and then, as the vehicle overhauled and passed the young man, turn at right angles and bow to him. The wheel almost brushed his shoulder. He drew back from it with a start and lifted his hat. Hazel, who was walking just in front of Berny, turned and projecting her lips so that they stood out from her face in a red circle, hissed through them:

"Old Lady Ryan!" and then in a slightly louder key:

"You take a hatchet and I'll take a saw,
And we'll cut off the head of my mother-in-law."

CHAPTER XIII.

The Root of All Evil.

The conversation with her old friend had upset Mrs. Ryan. These were grievances she did not talk of to all the world, and the luxury of such plain speaking was paid for by a reawakened smart. The numb ache of a sorrow was always with her, but her consciousness of it was dulled in the diversion of every day's occupations. Bringing it to the surface this way gave it a new vitality, and when the conversation was over and the visitor gone it refused to subside into its old place.

She went slowly up stairs, hearing the low murmur of voices from the sitting-room where Cornelia and Jack Duffy were still secluded. Even the thought of that satisfactorily-budding romance did not cheer her as it had done earlier in the day. As she had told Cannon, she was not the woman she had been. Old age was coming on her and with it a softening of her iron nature. She wanted her son, her Benjamin, dearly beloved with all the forces of her maturity as his father had been with all the glow of her youth.

In her own room she threw aside the lace curtains, and looking out on the splendor of the afternoon, determined to seek cheer in the open air. Like all Californians she had a belief in the healing beneficence of air and sunlight. As the sun had soothed Berny of her sense of care so now it wooed her enemy also to seek solace in its balm. She rang for the servant and ordered the carriage. A few minutes later, clad in rich enshrouding black, she slowly made her way down stairs and out to the sidewalk where the victoria, glittering in the trim perfection of its appointments and drawn by a pair of well-matched chestnuts, stood at the curb.

The man on the box touched his hat with respectful greeting and the Chinese butler, who had accompanied her down the steps, arranged the rug over her knees and stepped back with the friendly "good-by," which is the politeness of his race. They respected, feared and liked her. Every domestic who had ever worked in Delia Ryan's service from the first "hired girl" of her early Shasta days to the staff that now knew the rigors of her dominion, had found her a just and generous if exacting mistress. She had never been unfair, she had never been unkind. She was one of themselves and she knew how to manage them, how to make them understand that she was master, and that no drones were permitted in her hive; how to make them feel that she had a heart that sympathized with them, not as creatures of an alien class remotely removed from her own, but as fellow beings, having the same passions, griefs and hopes as herself.

As the carriage rolled forward she settled back against the cushioned seat and let her eyes roam over the prospect. It was the heart of the afternoon, still untouched by chill, not a breath stirring. Passing up the long drive which leads to the park, the dust raised by wheels hung ruddy in the air. The long shadows of trees striped the roadway in an irregular black pattern, picked out with spatterings of sunshine, like a spilled, gold liquid. Belts of fragrance, the breaths of flowering shrubs, extended from bushy coppices, and sometimes the keen, acrid odor of the eucalyptus rose on the air. From this lane of entrance the park spread fan-like into a still, gracious pleasance. The rich, golden light slept on level stretches of turf and thick mound-shaped groups of trees. The throb of music—the thin, ethereal music of out-of-doors—swelled and sank; the voices of children rose clear and fine from complicated distances, and once the raucous cry of a peacock split the quietness, seeming to break through the pictorial serenity of the lovely, dreamy scene.

Mrs. Ryan sat without movement, her face set in a sphinx-like profundity of expression. People in passing carriages bowed to her but she did not see them and their salutes went unreturned. Her vision was bent back on scenes of her past so far removed from what made up the present, so different and remote from her life today, that it did not seem as if the same perspective could include two such extremes.

She was thinking this as the carriage swept into the wider reach of the drive near the band stand. Though the music was still throbbing on the air, people were already leaving. Mrs. Ryan let her uninterested glance touch the hatted heads of the women and then move forward to the man who headed the column. He held by the hand a pretty, fair-haired child, who, leaning out from his restraining grasp, walked a little before him, looking back laughingly into his face. Mrs. Ryan's eyes, alighting on his back, became suddenly charged with a fierce fixity of attention. The carriage overhauled him and before he looked up she leaned forward and saw his profile,

The Talk Lasted an Hour.

the brow marked by a frown, the child's gay prattle causing no responsive smile to break the brooding gravity that held his features.

As he felt the vibration of the wheel at his shoulder he started aside and looked up. When he recognized his mother his face reddened, and, with a quick smile, he lifted his hat. Her returning salute was serious, almost tragically somber. Then the victoria swept on, and he and the child, neither for a moment speaking, looked after the bonneted head that soared away before them with a level, forward vibration, like a floating bird, the little parasol held stiffly erect on its jointed handle.

As Mrs. Ryan passed down the long park entrance she thought no more of the past. The sight of her son, heading the file of his wife's relations, his face set in an expression of heavy dejection, scattered her dreams of retrospect with a shattering impact.

The old woman's face was dark with passion, her pale lips set into a tight line. Money! Money might make trouble and bring disappointment, but it would talk to those people. Money was all they were after. Well, they could have it!

She let three days go by before she made the move she had determined on ten minutes after she had passed Dominick. The Wednesday morning following that Sunday she put on her outdoor things and, dispensing with the carriage, went down town on the car to see Bill Cannon.

The Bonanza King's office was on the first floor of a building owned by himself on one of the finest Montgomery street corners. With her approach heralded by a rustling of rich stuffs and a subdued panting, she entered the office. She did not waste time beating about the bush. Their talk lasted nearly an hour. Before the interview ended they had threshed out every aspect of the matter under discussion. There would be no loose ends or slighted details in any piece of work which engaged the attention of this bold and energetic pair of conspirators.

Two days after this momentous combination of her enemies, Berny was sitting in the parlor of her flat, writing a letter. It was three o'clock in the afternoon and she had just dressed herself for her daily jaunt down town.

She did not hear a foot ascending the stairs, till a tap on the door-post of the room made her turn and ejaculate a startled "Come in!" The door that led from the parlor to the hall had been removed, and a bamboo portiere hung in the opening. A large masculine hand thrust apart the hanging strands, and Bill Cannon, hat in hand, confident and yet apologetic, entered the room.

She looked at him inquiringly with something of wariness and distrust in her face.

She remembered him to be a friend of the Ryans', and she had arrived at the stage when any friend of the Ryans' was an enemy of hers. She looked at the old man guardedly, ready for an attack and bracing herself to meet it.

"You'll pardon this intrusion, won't you?" he said in a deep, friendly voice.

She looked up at him and made a slight inclination of her head as she had seen actresses do on the stage. "Won't you sit down, Mr. Cannon?" she added.

"Now, let me make my apologies for coming. In the first place, I'm an old man. We've got a few privileges to compensate us for the loss of so much that's good. Don't you think that's fair, Mrs. Ryan?"

Berny liked him. There was something so easy and affable in his manner, something that made her feel he would never censure her for her past, or, in fact, think about it at all.

"I'm sure I'm very glad you came," she said politely; "any friend of Dominick's is welcome here."

"Will you let me speak frankly, Mrs. Ryan?"

"Yes," said Berny. "Go right ahead."

"Mrs. Ryan will make you a rich woman, independent of any one, the money yours to do with as you like, if you'll consent to the few conditions she exacts."

"What are they?"

"That you will leave your husband for a year and at the end of that time ask him to give you your liberty, he suing you for divorce on the ground of desertion."

"It's a bribe," she said slowly, "a bribe to leave my husband."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," he answered with a deprecating shrug. "Call it a deal, a settlement. The terms are easy and favorable. You'll not find one of them unjust or unfair. You're to leave the city, going preferably to Chicago or New York, and staying there for the period of desertion. Seven thousand dollars will be set aside for your expenses. At the end of the year you are to write to Dominick telling him you no longer want to live with him and asking him to give you your freedom. After the divorce is granted the sum of fifty thousand dollars will be handed over to you, the one condition being that you will leave the country and go to Europe. It is understood, of course, that the matter's to be kept a secret from Dominick. He must think that you are acting entirely from your own free will. He mustn't guess his mother's had any part in it."

Berny lifted her head and looked at him. The color was now burning in her cheeks and her eyes seemed to hold all the vitality of her rigid face.

"You tell Mrs. Ryan," she said slowly, "that I'll lie dead in my coffin before I'll take her money and leave my husband."

"Well, I'm a patient man, and everything comes to him who waits."

She looked over her shoulder with a slight acid smile.

"Not everything," she said.

"So long," he answered, giving his hat a farewell wave at her. "I've enjoyed meeting you and hope we'll soon meet again in a more friendly way. Hasta Manana, Senora!"

She wheeled so that she faced him and gave a short nod, then watched him as he walked to the door. Here he turned, bowed deeply and respectfully, and passed out into the hall, the bamboo strands of the portiere clashing together behind him. A moment later she heard the bang of the street door.

Her two predominant sensations were rage and triumph. It deepened her detestation of the Ryans, and at the same time gave her a sense of intimacy with them. And it showed her her power. Standing in the middle of the room with her eyes still staring at the now motionless portiere strands, she saw, stretching away into a limitless gilded distance, her negotiations with her husband's family. If their desire to rupture the marriage took them thus far, where might it not take them?

It was not the Ryans alone who wanted to buy her off. It was the Cannons as well. They not only wanted Dominick to get rid of her; they wanted him to get rid of her so that he could marry Rose Cannon. The other girl was behind it all, accounted for the participation of the Bonanza King, accounted probably for the whole move—the pink and white girl in the French clothes who had all her life had everything and now wanted Berny Iverson's husband.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Moonlight Night.

A few nights after this, there was a full moon. Dominick, walking home from the bank, saw it at the end of the street's vista, a large, yellowish-pink disk floating up into the twilight. The evening was warm, like the early summer in other climates; and Dominick, walking slowly and watching the great yellow sphere deepening in color as it swam majestically upward, thought of evenings like this in the past when he had been full of the joy of life and had gone forth in the spirit of love and adventure.

The determination to accept his fate which had been with him on his return from Antelope had of late been shaken by stirrings of rebellion. Uplifted by the thought of his love for a woman hopelessly removed from him, but who would always be a lodestar to worship reverently and to guide him up difficult paths, he had been able to face his domestic tragedy with the high resolution of the martyr. But this exalted condition was hard to maintain in the friction of daily life with Berny.

To-night, the period of ill humor seemed over. Berny was not only once again her animated self, she was almost feverishly garrulous.

Fearful of angering her, or, still worse, of arousing her suspicions, Dominick bore her talk with all the fortitude he had, but he rose from the table with every nerve tingling, rasped and galled to the limit of endurance.

He did not come into the den immediately but roamed about, into the parlor, down the passage, and into his own room.

"Aren't you coming into the den?" she called, as she heard him pacing steadily along the passageway.

"No," he called back. "The moonlight's shining in at every window. It makes me restless. I don't feel like sitting still."

She sat on the divan, a paper spread before her face, but her eyes were slanted sidewise, unblinking in the absorption of her attention. Suddenly she heard a rattling sound which she knew to be from the canes and umbrellas in the hat-rack. She cast away the paper, and, drawing herself to the edge of the divan, peered down the passage. Dominick was standing by the hat-rack, his hat on the back of his head, his hand feeling among the canes.

"You've got your hat on," she called in a high key of surprise. "You're not going out?"

"Yes, I am," he answered, drawing out the cane he wanted. "It's a fine night, and I'm going for a walk."

Outside, Dominick walked slowly, keeping to the smaller and less frequented streets. It was a wonderful night, as still as though the moon had exerted some mesmeric influence upon the earth.

He walked on, skirting the hollow, and moving forward through streets where old houses brooded in overgrown gardens.

That part of California Street which crested the hill was but a few blocks beyond him, and before his mind would acknowledge it, his feet had borne him that way. He thought only to pass the Cannon house, to look at its windows, and see their lights. As it rose before him, a huge, pale mass checkered with shadows, the longing to see it—the outer shell that hid his heart's desire—passed into a keener, concentrated agitation that seemed to press out from his soul like a cry to her.

The porch yawned black behind pillars that in the daytime were painted wood and now looked like temple columns wrought in marble. Dominick's glance, sweeping the lines of yellowed windows, finally rested on this cavern of shadow, and he approached stealthily, as a robber might, his body close to the iron fence. Almost before his eyes had told him, he knew that a woman was standing there, leaning against the balustrade that stretched between the columns. A climbing rose spread in a mottling of darkness, over the wall beside her. Here and there it was starred with the small white faces of blossoms. As the young man drew near she leaned over the balustrade, plucked one of the blossoms, and, slowly shredding the leaves from the stem, stretched out her hand and let them fall, like a languid shower of silver drops, to the grass.

She bent over the balustrade to look at them, and in doing so, her eyes encountered the man below.

For a moment they looked at each other without speaking, then she said, her voice at the lowest note that would reach him:

"What are you doing there?"

"Watching you."

"Have you been standing there long?"

"No, only a few minutes. Why are you pulling the roses to pieces?"

She gave a little laugh and said something that sounded like "I don't know," and moved back from the balustrade.

"I'll Lie Dead in My Coffin Before I'll Take Her Money."

He thought she was going and clutched the iron spikes of the fence, calling up to her in a voice of urgent feeling, curiously out of keeping with the words, the first remark that came into his head:

"This is very different from Antelope, isn't it?"

"Yes," she said gravely, "we had no moonlight there, nothing but storms and gray clouds.

"Well, I must go in. The roses are all picked and papa'll be wondering where I am."

It seemed to Dominick just then that he could not lose her. She must stay a moment longer. Urgency that was imploring was in his voice as he said:

"Don't go! don't go! Stay just one moment longer! Can't you come down and talk for a minute?"

She listened, wavered, and was won over. Without answer she turned from the shadow of the porch into the light on the top of the steps, and from there slowly descended, her skirt gathered in one hand, and the other touching the baluster.

"I've wanted so to see you. I came by to-night hoping that perhaps I could catch a glimpse of your shadow on the curtain. I didn't expect anything like this."

He stopped, looking at her, and not listening to the few words of her answer.

"I think I wanted you so that my will called you out," he said in an impassioned whisper.

She said nothing and suddenly his hand sought hers, clasped it tight on the head of the lion, and he whispered again:

"Oh, Rose, if I could see you now and then—only for a moment like this."

He felt her hand, small and cold, crush softly inside his, and almost immediately was conscious of her effort to withdraw it. He instantly loosened his fingers, let hers slide from his grasp, and drew back.

"Good night," she said hurriedly, and without looking at him turned and went up the steps.

It was a great morning for Cornelia. She was engaged. Two evenings before, Jack Duffy, who had been hovering round the subject for a month, poised above it, as a hawk above delighted prey, had at last descended and Cornelia's anxieties were at an end.

The wind was not yet out in force; its full, steady sweep would not be inaugurated till early in the afternoon. It came now in gusts which fell upon Cornelia from the back and accelerated her forward progress, throwing out on either side of her a flapping sail of skirt.

It was after midday when she found herself approaching that particular block, along the edge of which the flower-venders place their baskets and display their wares. The boys and men, seeing that the brilliant lady was in a generous mood, collected about her, shouting out the excellences of their particular blossoms.

Cornelia, amused and somewhat bewildered, looked at the faces and bought recklessly.

"Well, Cornelia, are you trying to corner the curb-stone market?"

She wheeled swiftly, and saw her brother.

"Dominick!" she exclaimed, "you're just the person I want to see. I was going to write to you. I've got lots to tell you."

"Come along then and take lunch with me. I was on my way up to Bertrand's when I saw you. They'll give us a good lunch there and you can tell me all your secrets."

They walked up the street toward Bertrand's, a French restaurant which for years had enjoyed the esteem of the city's gourmets.

In the restaurant they found a vacant table in a corner, and Cornelia had to bottle up her good news while Dominick pondered over the bill of fare. She was impatient and drummed on the table with her fingers, while her eyes roamed about the room.

The order given and the first stages of lunch appearing, Cornelia could at last claim her brother's full attention.

"I told you how awfully anxious I was to see you, and how I was going to write to you, didn't I?"

Her brother looked up and his eye was caught by her rosily-blushing cheeks.

"Dear me, Cornie," he said with a look of slowly-dawning comprehension, "it really isn't—it really can't be—' "

"And why can't it be?" looking very much hurt. "What's there so queer about that?"

"Nothing, only I meant that I hadn't heard any rumors about it. Is it that?"

"Yes, it is, Dominick Ryan, and I don't see why you should be so surprised."

"Surprised! I'm more than surprised. I'm delighted—haven't been so pleased for years. Who is it?"

"Jack Duffy."

"Oh, Cornie, that's the best yet! That's great! It's splendid. I wish I could kiss you, but I can't here in the open restaurant. Why didn't you tell me somewhere where we would be alone? I'd just like to give you a good hug."

Cornelia leaned across the table and spoke with low-toned, almost tremulous earnestness:

"You know that if it were I, I'd ask your wife. You know that all the hard feelings I may once have had against her have gone. If it were for me to say, I'd have received her from the start. What I've always said is, 'What's the good of keeping up these fights? No one gets anything by them. They don't do any one any good.' But you know mommer. The first thing she said when we talked about the house wedding, and I said you'd give me away, was, 'If he'll come without his wife.' "

There were tears in her eyes and Dominick saw them and looked down at his plate.

"All right," he said quietly. "I'll come. When is it to be?"

"June," said the prospective bride, once more beginning to blush and beam, "early in June. The roses are so fine then, and we can have the house so beautifully decorated."

With a scraping of chair legs, they rose and, threading their way among the now crowded tables, passed out into the wind-swept streets. Here they separated, Cornelia, with her armful of wilting flowers, going home, and Dominick back to the bank.

Two hours later, while he was still bending over his books, in the hushed seclusion of the closed building, Bill Cannon was talking to Berny in the parlor of the Sacramento Street flat. This interview was neither so long, and (on Berny's part) did not show the self-restraint which had marked the first one. The offer of one hundred thousand dollars which the old man made her was refused with more scorn and less courtesy than had been displayed in her manner on the former occasion.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THEY SIDESTEP FOR MOTORS

Filipinos Heed the Signal and Give the "Devil Machine" Plenty of Road.

Manila may now be said to be up-to-the-minute in things metropolitan. The latest adjunct to its activities calling attention to progress in this direction was the recent appearance upon the streets of a motor car washed in mud and powdered with fine dust of various grades of colors produced between here and Baguio. It had made a new record between the summer capital and Manila.

The machine was stripped to a condition almost immodest, fenders and top were superfluous to requirements and no windshield protected the driver's face against the hot winds that blow at midday across the plain.

The friendliest feeling exists for the motor car. The barrios become a chorus of children with the ready "hello," even the dogs and chickens get the inspiration.

It may be due to the machine's being a stranger in this new section, but it is a fact that pedestrians and people in vehicles do respect the warning signal and give plenty of road.—Manila Bulletin.

K. C. M. G.

A pompous British politician who was proceeding to take over a governorship in one of the overseas dominions was approached on the promenade deck by an innocent-looking fellow-passenger, who, raising his hat, humbly inquired: 'Would you mind telling me what 'K. C. M. G.' means at the end of your name, sir? It has puzzled one or two of us."

"Knight Commander of St. Michael and St. George, of course," said the pompous one, as he inflated his chest.

"Oh!" said the innocent, "I thought it meant 'Kindly Call Me Governor!' "

When saloon keepers begin to talk temperature there is something brewing.